

**Blind Task Force Meeting**  
**September 14, 2005**  
**Missouri State Teacher's Association (MSTA)]**  
**407 South Sixth Street**  
**Columbia, Missouri**

**Members Present:** Paul Ajuwon; Grenetha Baldwin; Karen Berley; Steve Berman; Donna Borgmeyer; Cindy Dowis; Debbi Head; Kent Kolaga; Russ McCampbell; Patti Schonlau; Jim Sucharski; Sheila Wright.

**Members Not Present:** Lisa Wayland-Boettcher; Melodie Friedebach; Samuel Moore; Joe Sartorius.

**Guests Present:** Anthony Blades; Jennifer Coy; T.J. Hunt; Mike Merrick; Aundrayah Shermer; Susan Ford; John Heskett.

**DESE Staff Present:** Lori Conner; Betty McCartney.

**Action Points:**

- Betty McCartney will send Dr. Heskett's power-point presentation electronically to the BTF members;
- Lori Conner will create BTF Letterhead;
- Betty will send the final End of Year Budget Report to the BTF members;
- Betty will check with Educational Technology Consortium (ETC) on the status of their Braille writers and availability for permanent loan to BSS. She will also address loan possibilities with BSS and determine needs. Betty will make recommendations to Melodie Friedebach on supplying Braillewriters to BSS. Betty will send request for additional BSS and for 401 funding to BTF (Form 5).
- Debbi will send a letter to Samuel Moore advising him that his position has been declared vacant.
- Jim will adjust two letters addressing accommodations and vision certification and send onto Debbi. Paul will be consulted on vision certification concerns.
- Jennifer will send the PAVE Grant info to Lori for email distribution
- Debbi will schedule a conference call with the Executive Committee to discuss Task Force membership recommendations
- Betty and Debbi will schedule a conference call with Standing and Ad Hoc Committee Chairs to discuss recommendations from Vision Study.

**Call to Order/Introductions:** Debbi Head called the meeting to order at 10:18 a.m. All present introduced themselves. It was noted that Cindy Dowis arrived to the meeting at 10:30 a.m.

**Approval of Minutes:** Steve Berman reviewed the minutes from the May 11 meeting and the following corrections were made:

Page 2 – Under "Transition Committee," delete a) and c) and add all the recommendations from the Transition Subcommittee's Report.

Page 2 – Under “Budget Committee,” change “MOAT” to “MATP”: The BTF chairperson responded to the Missouri Assistive Technology Program (MATP) scholarship request, denying the.....

Page 5 – Under “BSS Reports,” second paragraph, line two and three, change “and presented at “Cal-Rep” to presented at “Power-Up.”

Third paragraph, line one, change: Aundrayah Shermer “attended” to “presented” at Family Fun Night in March which focused on recreation and summer activities.

Third paragraph, line three, change: Aundrayah “will be attending” to “presented” a monthly Effective.....

Russ McCampbell moved to accept the minutes with corrections. Donna Borgmeyer and Grenetha Baldwin seconded the motion and it was unanimously accepted.

**Agenda Review:** Debbi Head made changes to the agenda. She moved Paul Ajuwon up on the agenda and new agenda items, “Review BTF Applications and Meeting Dates” were added.

Sheila Wright made a motion to accept the agenda changes. Donna Borgmeyer seconded the motion and it was unanimously accepted.

**VI Focus Study update:** John Heskett reviewed a power-point presentation on the *Services for Students Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired in Missouri*.

The following recommendations were suggested for policy leaders:

- A structured statewide process should undertake to develop a shared vision for the education of students who are blind or visually impaired.
- High expectations for all students who are blind or visually impaired should be maintained by all involved in the education process.
- A review of personnel preparation is needed in Missouri to appropriately respond to the personnel needs of local school districts.

Recommendations Made for MSB:

- Continued availability of a strong residential and educational program
- Align curriculum with grade-level expectations (GLEs) and grade level assessments developed by DESE
- Assurance that Assistive technology support is accessible to all students
- Development of flexible service delivery model capable of providing intensive instruction in critical skill areas.
- Redefinition and expansion of Outreach Services to meet the needs of rural Missouri
- Assume a position of leadership amongst school districts to ensure that Professional Development is provided.
- Coordinate the establishment of a statewide social support network for students who are blind and/or VI
- Coordinate the development of regional and statewide parent training support networks.

Dr. Heskett presented an excellent report. The report looks at systemic problems. The recommendation was made that all stakeholders meet to talk about their service roles, how the

system's pieces can work together, and how all stakeholders can deliver to create a seamless system. A conference to bring all players to the table was suggested.

Dr. Heskett will present his report to **AER** in October. It is unknown at this time if he will present to other groups.

Kent Kolaga made a motion to accept recommendations from John Heskett's study as the BTF work for next year. Sheila seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously.

**Outreach AdHoc Committee:** The Outreach Committee needs more time to review Dr. Heskett's report. After reviewing the report, the committee will make recommendations.

Paul Ajuwon reported on vision certification. Missouri State University will make a recommendation to DESE for certification of individuals who are seeking certification in Blind and Partially Sighted who have teacher certification. All teachers must take the Praxis II for Mild/Moderate prior to certification in Blind and Partially Sighted. For Temporary Authorization Certification in Blind and Partially Sighted, an individual must receive a passing score on the Praxis II for Visual Impairments, 21 hours of distance education and 12 hours of specific coursework from any institution of higher education.

The August 25, 2005 letter that Dr. Chris Craig wrote to DESE is approved. It can be shared. Please call Dr. Paul Ajuwon for more information. Members stated that there is a need to make sure we get this information out to districts. The BTF must work to get this certification letter distributed.

#### **Standing Committee Updates:**

**Annual Study Committee:** Members discussed whether the data that has been collected has meaning. Various ideas were discussed on making the Literacy Study more meaningful:

- Spending additional money on adding threads to report;
- Statistical significance of numbers in VI data – compare VI to general population;
- Accommodations discussed.

Action Point: Jim will rework the accommodation and vision education concern letters and resend to Debbi Head. Paul will be consulted regarding the vision education concerns.

**Governmental Affairs Committee:** Assistive Technology regulations are promised in December for IDEA'04.

**Transition Committee:** The committee will make recommendations for follow-through on the Transition Report, and Dr. Heskett's report.

#### **AdHoc Committee Updates:**

**By-Laws Committee:** The updated By-Laws have been posted to the Web. As a committee, their task has been completed and the chairperson dissolved the committee.

**Budget Committee:** No report.

**MAP Improvement Committee:** The Map Accommodations letter has been addressed with Melodie Friedebach and Walt Brown, based on the information they shared with him previously. Jim Sucharski will restructure Paul's letter and the Accommodations letter using BTF letterhead that Lori Conner will create. Jim asked Walt and Rusty Rosenkoetter for feedback on what has been accomplished. Walt indicated that he will work on the Accommodations that were

addressed in the letter. As a follow-up the committee members suggested that the letters be sent to appropriate DESE staff to document the continuing concerns.

**Vision Summit Committee:** The Chairperson asked for volunteers to serve on the Vision Summit Committee. The following people will serve on the committee: Susan Ford, Patti Schonlau, Mike Merrick, Donna Borgmeyer and Steve Berman (Chair). The Vision Summit is planned for March. Mike will contact hotels next week in the Jefferson City and Columbia areas to look at dates for the Vision Summit. He has volunteered to make hotel reservations, arrangements and send out the bids. Once the date is set, DESE will then execute the contracts.

**National Agenda Update:** A more detailed report will be provided at the next BTF meeting. Jim is attending the National Agenda Conference in Louisville, Kentucky next month. Universal formatting and full funding of special education are amongst items to be discussed.

**Financial Update:** The beginning balance is with \$294.65 expended. Anthony Blades is now full-time employee and his \$70,000 salary comes out of the 401 Task Force fund. Professional Development money has been approved for Southeast Missouri State University (SEMO) and Missouri State University (MSU). DESE will continue to ask for funding for nine BSS. All current BSS contracts have been approved. . BTF funds paid for the VI Focus Study completed by Dr. Heskett. Action Points: Betty will send an end of the year financial report to all BTF members as well as Form 5-budget information.

**Blind Skills Specialists (BSS) Reports:** Aundrayah Shermer presented four well-attended Assistive Technology (AT) summer workshops. Fall workshops are scheduled. She is coordinating the O&M Program. She is receiving many calls about mentoring.

Jennifer Coy is completing many assessments. Pam Arbeiter will be presenting workshops while Jennifer is on leave. No action has been taken on the PAVE Project. Action Point: Jennifer will forward a copy of the PAVE Project Grant for BTF distribution.

Anthony Blades reported on summer workshops. He has scheduled fall workshops and assistive technology training, see <http://www.dese.state.mo.us/divspced/EffectivePractices/vitrain.html> for more information. Anthony discontinued his Braille class because Braille writers were not available. Action Point: Betty will check with ETC and Melodie F. to see if Braillewriters can be provided to the BSS and the number needed.

The National Federation of the Blind (NFB) will continue to work for BSS in all nine regions. This is their highest legislative priority.

The Task Force Executive Committee will review applications for membership by a conference call set up by Betty McCartney after background checks are in and references contacted. The following five positions are open: Employer, Parent, Teacher, VI Teacher, Special Education Administrator, and Student. Sheila made a motion that the Executive Committee receive resumes and vote on applicants; Donna Borgmeyer seconded the motion and it was unanimously accepted.

Discussion on student member: Samuel Moore has not attended since September 2004. Chairperson declared the student vacancy open. The chairperson will send a letter to Samuel.

**Governors' Council for Disabilities:** The Governor's Council has a new chairman, Daniel P. Card. The list of awards available can be located at: [www.gcd.ia.mo.gov](http://www.gcd.ia.mo.gov). The Poster and

Journalism Contest theme is *Inclusion Leads to Opportunity*. A Legislative Survey will go out next week. Donna will send surveys to anyone who wants one. The Youth Leadership Forum had 14 participants this summer. ILRC is sponsoring a Special Needs Prom April 22, 2006 for all special needs students ages 14 thru 30 who are South and East of Columbia.

AER: Conference Oct. 13-15 Registration is open now and may be extended. Membership is \$120. The conference will take place at St. Louis Pavilion Hotel Downtown.

Power Up is scheduled for April 10-11 at Holiday Inn Executive Center in Columbia (<http://www.at.mo.gov/training.shtm>).

Several vision teachers from Special School District (SSD) are participating in evaluating the new Patterns Reading Program from APH. The Regional Coalition for Experiential Education is hosting a student event that will focus on O & M skills on Oct. 13<sup>th</sup>. VI students from the St. Louis region will participate in this event.

Resources:

- Video: Teen Scene follows four high school students through high school;
- Book: AFB: *Teachers Who are Blind and VI* Excerpts from the experiences of teachers who are blind and VI;
- Materials: National Braille Press has a Braille resource bag available for parents. The bag contains Braille materials to encourage parents of VI students to learn and use Braille. Parents have to call and request *My Own Braille Book Bag*;
- Steve Berman distributed a bibliography of books for parents or teachers to members.

Hurricane Katrina impacted schools for the Blind in Mississippi, Louisiana, and Alabama. Baton Rouge School for the Visually Impaired has provided housing for National Guard members and others assisting with hurricane clean up.

The BTF planned the following dates for next year's meetings:

February 22, 2006	Location to be determined
May 10, 2006	Location to be determined
September 20, 2006	Location to be determined
December 6, 2006	Location to be determined

**Next Meeting:** November 30, 2005, Missouri State Teacher's Association (MSTA), Columbia, Missouri.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m.